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NURSES' HOMES: DESIRABLE AND UNDESIRABLE FEATURES

FIRST PAPER

BY ADDA ELDREDGE, R.N.

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One of the problems of to-day which those who are endeavoring to conduct schools for nurses are facing, is the providing of a proper home for the pupil nurses. In the old days, long before the so-called "shortage of probationers," when it was still considered a privilege for a young woman to be accepted in a hospital training school, the home or place in which she was housed, was often some undesirable part of the hospital, sometimes under the eaves, even—let us whisper it—in the basement. To-day, although the writer has, during the past three years, seen such quarters, they are the exception, and we are more and more finding homes erected especially for the purpose for which they are used. Dormitories, i. e., wards, for pupil nurses though still found, particularly in connection with some of the Sisters' hospitals, are admittedly relics and are used only as makeshifts, awaiting reduction in the cost of building to be replaced by modern homes. In some of these, privacy is aimed at by an arrangement of curtains around the beds. Sleeping porches, in many instances, while not giving privacy, have brought plenty of fresh air with a minimum of discomfort to the nurse, when the room used for dressing, etc., is not overcrowded, as was seen, for instance, in one place where three rooms provided dressing space for the fourteen or more students, each of whom had a bed on the porch.

I have seen the superintendent whose room was bed room, sitting room, and office combined, with screens hiding those things too intimate for the latter use. Of course many superintendents have delightful suites, of bed room, sitting room, and bath. One or two schools have provided for the officers of the school, assistants, etc., bed room and bath and, occasionally, there are two head nurses who share the last and even a sitting room, but this is rare, the officers too often having no sitting or reception room except that provided for the pupils.

It is a curious thing to find that even in some of the newer types of home, with everything in the way of comfort, and much that is beautiful, the class rooms, laboratories, etc., are deliberately placed in the basement, showing that a home, not a school, is still the idea of the trustees and, I might even say, of the superintendent.

What should the ideal school home be? First, of course, single rooms, if possible, with running water. The rows of bowls in line, in most lavatories, we fear do not tend to encourage either bathing or that most precious possession,—modesty. The number of baths to be provided for students need not be given in figures,—but there should be enough. Who of us, trained in the old days, but remembers the standing in line waiting for your senior to finish, that you might get the bath, and at ten o'clock being forced to go to bed cross and bathless? Surely have enough baths for all.

An assembly room and class rooms, in size and number proportionate to the size of the school, should be planned and arranged with proper lighting for both day and night. Nurses are too often taught the care of the eyes in rooms where electric light must be used in the day time and possibly with direct lighting,—and “how to ventilate” in rooms which, if ventilated, are cold and draughty. Small wonder that such poor psychology has poor results. There should be laboratories, both pathological and dietetic, demonstration rooms, such as any school teaching scientific subjects must have. Reception rooms, living rooms, etc., must also be in proportion to the size of the school.

All these for the students, and we are sure in such a building the superintendent of nurses will be well cared for; but what of the equally important, ever changing band of faithful assistants, instructors, head nurses, surgical and night supervisors,—what comforts have we provided for them? Where will they receive their callers, where gather for recreation, etc.? In most schools we have forgotten them; they are neither “fish, flesh, fowl, nor good red herring.” It really isn't dignified for her to receive her callers, perhaps men, in the same room with the students, so she must have none. She may, herself, be only a few months out of the school, hungry after her three years of close confinement to the hospital and school, for the same amusements and entertainments that girls in other fields have, and she must go on giving up these natural and innocent things, for lo! she must be a living example,—and then we wonder why the recent graduates, yes, even the older ones, are unwilling, the best of them, sometimes, to stay in hospital work, and why when they do, they are often such poor examples. So let us plan reception rooms and living rooms for the graduates who officer the school, with freedom to use them and have a normal life when off duty.

We have failed to mention libraries, yet we already have some very good ones. The Rhode Island Hospital has a good fiction library, a reference library, each in its own room, and a magazine room, all kept up to date by Dr. Peters as a memorial to his wife. Another excellent library, as we remember it, reference books and magazines,

is at the Cincinnati General. It is well managed and used. There are others, but these two seem especially to stand out in the memory. A library should mean a place for quest and study, well lighted and comfortable, with chairs and tables for both reading and writing.

Tennis courts, swimming pools, and gymnasiums are to be found in some homes; at the other extreme, as was seen by the writer, was a little living room furnished with donated lamps from the electrician who supplied the hospital bulbs, its table from the undertaker's, its rug and curtains from the department store, and its picture from the superintendent of nurses. This room was criticised by the president of the training school board as "cultivating a taste for luxuries."

A pleasant dining room is needed, for oh! the dreary dining rooms there are in the United States, where nurses eat their three meals daily, for three consecutive years, many of them in the basement and reached by such devious and unpleasant ways. How high up are many of the windows, with no view and little air. Cellars? Yes, some are, and how few dining rooms in our many schools have any taste shown in either the room or the table furnishings. Yet did it ever occur to the hospital board how little there is in hospital nursing to tempt the appetite, and how much to destroy it? Should not this room where the nurses eat be the brightest, cleanest, most attractive dining room which can be planned? And should it not attract, even draw, the nurse to it? So much of her health depends on her food, and appetite is so much the result of sight and of smell, too! So have that dining room bright, well ventilated, yet warm.

A place where the pupil can cook, make fudge, get a lunch, etc.; a laundry that she can use, once a luxury, now almost a necessity, are to be found in almost every nurses' home worthy the name.

Then the furnishing of this home, residence, or school, should everywhere be in good taste, simple, plain, so it will stand the wear, yet pretty and restful. Here memory brings a picture of the exquisite taste in the furnishing of the new home for its nurses at the Decatur Hospital, Decatur, Ill. The rooms are alike in quality and general character, but different in design and coloring,—the whole, a joy for every one who enters, as well as for the student nurse who finds it a delightfully restful home after the day of ministering to the sick. This home is presided over by a college woman who has previously been in charge of one of the halls of a woman's college.

This paper is intended to outline neither the best nor the worst which the various nursing schools in the different parts of the country have to offer in the way of homes for nurses, but to offer a few suggestions to which, we hope, others may be added, for anything which attracts young women from the best homes into the profession of

nursing and which makes their training as nurses part of a system which will make them educated and cultured women, normally developed on the practical, the intellectual, and the social side, examples as well as teachers of health,—cannot fail to be important to every one, to nurses as well as to hospital boards.

A second paper on this subject, written by Amy M. Hilliard, will appear in the December JOURNAL.

LINDA RICHARDS AS I KNEW HER

BY AGNES B. JOYNES

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In writing this paper, I have quoted from a hospital diary those passages relating to Miss Richards. They do not do her justice, of course, but written spontaneously as they were, and day by day during my training under her, they may give a better idea of her personality and teaching than anything I could write at the present time. They begin during a visit in Worcester, Mass., in the year 1904, where Miss Richards was then establishing a training school in a State Hospital. It was during the last years of her active hospital life. She was working then, as she had been for many years, to advance the standards of her school, educationally and in every other way; she was also striving as she had been from the beginning, for better facilities for training in the schools. Her work was then, as it had been often, rather single handed, I am afraid. What her patient, uphill labor accomplished may be seen in the best training schools of the country to-day. Greater things, due to her influence, will be seen as the years go by.

A few facts regarding Miss Richards' early professional life, which were current among the girls of our school, and which I have recorded, are given in more detail in her book of reminiscences which every nurse in the world should read—and then everybody else.

May 1, 1904. I have almost decided to take the nurse's training, which I have always meant to take some time. One school for nurses here is conducted by no less a personage than Miss Linda Richards, that wonderful American woman and nurse. To train to be a nurse under her supervision—what an experience it would be! But the school happens to be in a hospital for the insane. I should be scared to death to work there. However, a friend of mine has gone there to train. I met the enthusiastic young woman to-day, and she told me all about it. Miss Richards, it seems, was the first woman in America to receive a nurse's diploma. She trained under all the hardships that